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S E R M O N

Preached at

W H I T E - H A L L,

ON

Sunday, the 17th. of February, 1695.

Before the Right Honourable the

Lord Chamberlain, Ladies of the Bed-Chamber, and others of the Household to our late Gracious Queen *MARY*, of Blessed Memory.

By *J. Adams, A. M.*

Rector of S. *Alban's Woodstreet.*

Publish'd at the Request of that Honourable Audience.

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I S A I A H X X X I I . 1 7 .

*The Work of Righteousness shall be Peace,
and the Effect of Righteousness Quiet-
ness, and Assurance for Ever.*

Human Nature is very subject to Presumption or Despair, according as mens Circumstances are: this appears in the *Jews* particularly; and therefore 'twas the manner of their Prophets to mingle Threats and Promises together.

Thus in the beginning of this Chapter, the Evangelical Prophet describes our Saviour, and the Happiness of his Kingdom, under the Person of *Hezekiah*. (verse 9.) Then turns them of a sudden to a sight of those Miseries which should befall their Na-

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tion before this should come to pass ; but then lest this should deject them too much, he assures them that their Afflictions shall last no longer, then *Until the Spirit was poured out upon them from on High,* (verse 15.) at which time *Judgment should dwell in the Wilderness, and Righteousness remain in the fruitful Field.* Nor was this all, but *The Work of Righteousness shall be Peace, and the Effect of Righteousness Quietness, and Assurance for Ever.*

By the Work of Righteousness is meant, as this place refers to Christ, and concerns us in particular, the Acting according to the Precepts of the Gospel.

The Word Peace has a large signification , but seems to be used here for the inward Peace or Tranquility of the Soul : By Quietness is meant Security from outward Dangers : by Assurance for Ever a Settled Trust, an Entire Confidence in God.

That the Work of Righteousness produces Peace, Quietness, and Assurance for Ever, in these Senses which I have mention'd, I shall endeavour to shew,

I. As to the Inward Peace, or Tranquility of the Soul ; the Work of Righteousness causeth this upon several accounts.

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1. Because this is most Natural to the Soul of Man. If Reason be the thing which distinguishes Man from other Creatures, his Ease and Happiness must consist in the Acting according to this, and the improvement of it. But Reason leads us of it self to the chief grounds of those things which are Commanded us in the Gospel, as the Works of Righteousness: as the Knowledge of a God, of Good and Evil, and Reward and Punishment hereafter.

And tho men are sometimes so perverse, as to endeavour to destroy these Notions in themselves and others, yet all the while they do this Violence to their Understandings, the Soul is unnaturally forc'd and strain'd, as appears by its frequent striving in Doubts and Fears. Whereas he that Acts according to his Reason, and Endeavours to improve the Natural Notions of a God by Searching into His Reveal'd Will, and living according to it, does that which is most agreeable to His Nature, and finds the most perfect Peace of Mind; and the Rest and Acquiescence, which is the Effect of having done Well, is like that which Natural Bodies find by lying still in their proper Places: Which proves that Righteousnes is particularly agreeable to the Soul of Man, and that the Works of it give Peace and Satisfaction; while every Work of Wickednes is Acting contrary to some

Principle or other belonging to it, and consequently causes Disquiet and Confusion.

II. The Work of Righteousness, or the Acting according to the Precepts of the Gospel, brings Peace to the Mind, by leading it to a clearer Knowledge of God than it can have from Nature, and by conduced to the improvement of that Knowledge.

Tho the corruptible body presseth down the Soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind. Wisd. 9. 15. yet these Expressions shew that this is unnatural, and argue Resistance and Reluctancy; Accordingly, we may observe that the Soul is frequently strugling and endeavouring upwards, and by its quitting so soon its fullest Enjoyments, by its perpetually hunting about after new Objects, shews plainly, that Nothing of this World is of sufficient Worth, to improve, or employ it. But if at length it can, by the Assistance of Right Reason and Divine Grace, raise itself to Heaven, what Joy, what sweet Acquiescence does it find in the Knowledg and Contemplation of its God! For if there be the strongest Inclination to Union between things of the same Nature, the Soul being immaterial, can have no immediate, no proper Connexion with material Objects; But when it meets with Spiritual ones, rejoices in what is like itself: How then must it be pleased, when it has discovered the

the Father of Spirits! What unspeakable Joy must it find, in being united to God himself by the Works of Righteousness!

But alas ! In how wretched a Condition was Mankind in this Regard before the Gospel ? How little Knowledge had they of God, and therefore how little Progress did they make in the Works of Virtue ? Some thought Him a Cruel and Inflexible Being, and that whatever came to pass, was by absolute Necessity ; and this took off all Hope and Comfort in Affliction : Others thought Him an Idle and Careless Being, not concerning Himself at all with the Events of Things, or Actions of Men ; and this took away the Relish of Success, made it always suspected, since what came by Chance, might be as quickly lost by it. As for the Jews, tho' they had a better Notion of the True God , yet the Passion which work'd chiefly upon them was Fear : God revealed Himself to this stubborn People, by His dreadful Attributes of Power and Justice, and therefore their Obedience was Servile and Uneasie to 'em : But how soon were all these Evils Remedy'd ! And how plainly did God Reveal Himself to the whole World, by the Coming of our Blessed Saviour ? By His Coming the Abominations of the Heathen Worship, the Delusions of their Oracles, the vain Boasts of their Virtue were Discover'd, by the Coming of the *Desire of all Nations*, the *Prince of Peace*,

Peace, the Lord of Life and Glory: That Fear and Dread which attended the Mosaical Law was qualify'd by that Love which is the Foundation of the Gospel; and the terrible Name of the *Lord of Hosts, the God to whom Vengeance belongeth,* changed into the Mild and Sweet Style of the *God of Peace and Consolation, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* So that all here contributes to our inward Peace : Here Power and Goodness, Justice and Mercy, Moderate our Fear and Love so sweetly, that they produce such a Smoothness in the Mind, as cannot be equall'd by Love or Joy alone ; for tho the Passions of Love and Joy are more agreeable to Nature, because their Objects are what we suppose to be good, then Fear or Sadness, because their Objects are what we suppose to be Evil ; yet they are no less Troublesome and Dangerous in the Excess ; So that they require a convenient Allay, and an equal Mixture of both together : and in this equal Mixture, wherein the Soul is neither toss'd nor driven violently one way or other, consists its Ease and Happiness.

This is that Ease which the Mind finds in the Knowledg of God, which must be suppos'd as the Ground of our Obedience in Working Righteousness ; and this Knowledg is wonderfully increased by the Works of Righteousness. A Barren Contemplation of the Perfections of the Divine Nature, is no Improvement of the Soul ;

Soul; but when it is withal fruitful in good Works, this is what the Scripture calls *Drawing nearer to God*, and being *like Him*: and for this God has promised His Holy Spirit; by which they shall have a more full Knowledg of Him. Thus our Blessed Saviour, (14. John 21. verse.) *He that bath my commandments, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my father, and I will love him, and will manifest my self unto Him.* And from these Grounds it is, that the Work of Righteousness brings Peace to the Soul in the following Respects: as,

III. The Work of Righteousness contributes to the Peace of the Soul, by the Pleasure which is to be found in the instant of doing it. This, I do not question, but every Body here has frequently experienc'd: there is no one Work of Righteousnes which regards God or our Neighbour, but bring along with it its peculiar Satisfaction.

What an unspeakable Peace of Mind accompanies Devout and Fervent Prayer? How is the Heart enlarged in Holy Joy, when it pours out itself in Praise and Thanksgiving to its Great and Good Creator? And when we assist our Neighbour, either by Relieving his Wants, or Comforting his Sorrows, are we not good to our selves, in the Satisfaction which we feel immediately, as well as the Reward which we

we expect hereafter ! What a generous Delight is there in a Quick and Ample Return of any Benefit ! And what a Blessing to a great Mind is the very Opportunity of being grateful ! But in that Noblest way of Conquest, of overcoming an Enemy with Kindness, when 'tis in our Power to be Severe to him, is a more Rational and Complete Satisfaction, than in that which is counted by some the Sweetest of all things; Revenge. In a word, the most Solid, Sublime, and Durable Delight accompanies the Act of Doing Well ; and tho there be much Danger in most kinds of Satisfaction in ones self, there is no fear of Flattery in the Applause of a Faithful Conscience. When a Soul well practis'd and experienc'd in Virtue, and conscious of a due and regular Use of its free Will Acquiesces in its good Actions, and something whispers from within, *Well done thou good and faithful servant.* — *Happy is the people that are in such a case: yea, blessed is the man who has (thus) the Lord for his God.* Psal. 144. v. 15.

IV. The Work of Righteousness promotes our Inward Peace by Regulating our Passions : How great Disturbers of the Mind these are, is too well Known ; and yet how ready is every Body to be led away by them : How little of the least of them, is sufficient to make Vain Man ! That Lord of the World ! That Boaster of his Reason ! A Tyrant over his fellow Creatures,

Creatures, and a Slave to himself. Sometimes the uneasiness of Pride Sours him into Habitual Peevishness ; sometimes he is rais'd in unreasonable Joy, and then cast down again in as unjust Despair ; then Envy and Ambition, Grief, Hatred, and Revenge, Rage in him by Turns, and often all together : What can express the misery of the Soul in this Condition ? Yet this is not all ; this makes a Man not only miserable as to himself, but odious or Contemptible to all the World.

There is something in Gentleness and Meekness which is most proper to procure Respect and Love ; For these Qualities are the Causes of Order and Beauty, not only in Peoples Looks, but in their Words and Actions ; but in Anger or any other violent Passion, all is Deformity ; yet such a Deformity as becomes rather ridiculous than terrible ; for tho it may surprise at first, yet when it is found to be unreasonable and customary, it is scorn'd and contemn'd, and when it finds that it is so, it rages often unto Madness.

Now this Violence of Passion is chiefly occasion'd by Mens being mistaken in their Esteem or Dislike of the things of this World, and the Rashness of their Inclinations or Aversions accordingly. Whereas the Work of Righteousness supposes a true Knowledg

of the Good and Evil of such things; and is nothing else but a Regular Pursuit of the first, and an Orderly Flight from the latter: And in this consists the Government of all our Passions, and our Peace and Happiness. An ill Man can find nothing of this, while his Passions drag or hurry him each a different way; But O, what Rest, what Quiet, what Security of Mind can a good Christian want, when every Work of Righteousness joyns kindly with the other, and all contribute sweetly to his Peace! The Wicked are, in reference to their Extravagant Restless Passions, *compar'd to a troubled sea, which casts up mire and dirt, (Is. 57.20.)* Turn the Metaphor, and you will find the whole Life of the Righteous Man a continu'd Calm; How Compos'd is his Temper! How moderate are his Desires! and how well Govern'd his Fears!

And this is not only caus'd but also promoted by such Works of Righteousness as are enjoyn'd by the Gospel; because that Jesus who enjoyns them there, give us also the greatest Example of Humility and Meekness: for with what Patience did He go about doing Good! Healing the Sick Graciously, Instructing the Ignorant Gently, and Reproving the Wicked Calmly! With what Lowliness did He bear the greatest Injuries of Contempt or Violence! Alas, if we reflect in the least upon His miserable Life and Death, we shall

shall find a Thousand Instances, wherein we may Learn of him to be meek and lowly, (Mat. 11.) and in so doing, to find Rest to our Souls. When I name the Word Jesuſ, says one of the Fathers, (Bernard. in 15. Serm. Cantic.) all that is Sweet and Delightful comes into my Mind ; Grace, Mercy, Bounty, Forgivenes, Goodnes and Love, compose the Blessed Sound, and the very Pronouncing of it, as it cast out Devils heretofore, might be ſufficient now to Allay our Passions, and Compose our fiercest Anger or Revenge.

But of all the Passions, there is none more uneasie than Fear, and no Object ſo apt to cause this as Death; but the Work of Righteousneſſ continues Peace to the Soul, by ſecuring it from this : The Wicked are in this Regard the fartheſt from any Peace, they own that Death cannot be avoided, they are ignorant when it will happen, and yet never think of it till 'tis upon 'em: Then all the Faculties of the Soul are in as great Confuſion as a Town taken by Surprise, and the stubborn obſtinate Wretch fits him down, and expects the Worſt in a ſurly Despair: the more timorous sneak and cringe in Officioſe Superſtitioп; this upon a ſudden Attack of Death; but if it comes on by Degrees, if they reach old Age, what ſad Spectacles of Woe are they ! What Ruines of Vice appear in every Limb! yet their greatest Hell

is not visible, the Torments of the Mind are far more insupportable.

But the Righteous feel nothing of all this ; there can be no Fear where no Guilt is, and for Death it self, they know that this is but the Passage to that Eternity which is their Reward : How bleſſ'd and happy is he ! How ſecure his Innocence ! Who reflecting upon one wellspent Day , can ſay , *Return to thy Rest, O my Soul, for the Lord hath rewarded thee :* 'Tis but doing thus for a little while, and he may with as much Readiness and Joy lie down in the Grave.

The Life of a Good Christian ought to be a continual Contemplation upon Death ; for he that keeps this farthest Point in his Eye, ſhall never mistake his Way : He that considers how ſoon his Body, tho *it be fearfully and wonderfully made* ; though he be never ſo Healthful or ſo Young , ſo Great or ſo Good ; is by the leaſt Accident shaken into its Dufi, will ever be in readineſs ; if Death come never ſo unexpected, 'twill find him doing his Lords Will : but if he be continu'd to a good old Age, his Body fails Regularly, because he liv'd ſo ; every Paſſion and Appetite grows leſs imperious , as every Sense decays , and the Soul grows more ſprightly and vigorous the nearer it is to its Separation. Nay let

let us follow such a one to his last Minute, let us consider him as just passing into the next World; if he have leisure to look back on this, what a Blessed and Clearful Prospect does his well-spent Life afford him; how do his Works of Righteousness rise to his View in Numerous and Goodly Order! There where he sees how many Naked he has Clothed, how many Sick he has Visited, how many Temptations he has Mortified, has he any thing to do ~~but to comfort~~
but to Comfort his Friends useless and unreasonable Sorrow? Or does any Passion move him, unless it be a Holy Joy for the Nearness of Eternity? No, certainly, *Mark the perfect, and behold the upright;* for whatever his Life is, 'tis certain that the Death, *the end of that man is Peace.* Psal. 37. 37.

But it may be objected, that a Man may be so absolute an Atheist, and have so fear'd a Conscience, as to be past feeling, past any Sense of Guilt, or Fear of Death; such a Monster can scarce be fancied, but never known: the most Speculative Atheist can get no farther than Incertainty as to a God and future State, and how far incertainty in a matter of so great Importance can contribute to a settled Peace of Mind, any one may guess, when what Pains soever he shall take to Root up or Stifle these Notions, the Danger, the dismal Consequence of being mistaken, will return often upon him, and let him choose what Vice

Vice he pleases (for that's the modern way of Dispelling these Vapours, as they call 'em) yet after the most industrious Debauch, this Qualm of Mind will always follow ; but more especially if any Calamity befalls him, what a Wretch does he grow without Council or Courage ; then however he has been entranc'd for a Moment, the frightful Images of his former Wickedness return more powerfully, and increasing still in Terrour as Death draws on : *There is no Peace, saith my God, unto the Wicked ; the way of Peace they have not known in their Lives, and therefore shall never find it at their Deaths.*

V. The Work of Righteousnes does not only promote Peace in the Act of doing Well , but also by the memory of such Actions ; by leaving such sweet impressions upon the Soul, as bless us as often as we Reflect upon them with ever new and everlasting, Pleasure. What Horrour ! Confusion and Dejection of Soul attends the Reflections of an ill Conscience ! When a Wretch considers how Perversly, and Ingratefully he has neglected, or Despis'd the most gentle and gracious means of Salvation ; Fear, Sorrow, Shame, Anguish and Dsrepair, Wrack and Torment him : the Sense of an Offended God, His Love and Mercy Despis'd, His Justice and Anger Provok'd ; no length of Time, no change of Place, can give him any Ease : This is excellently Describ'd in that dreadful threat ;

threat. (Deut. 28, 65. &c.) *Thou shalt find no Ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee trembling of Heart, and failing of Eyes, and sorrow of Mind, and thy life shall hang in Doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night: in the morning thou shalt say would God it were evening, and in the evening, thou shalt say would God it were morning.* So restless a Condition, so far from any the least Peace is the wicked Man. And this is the farthest from Remedy of any Evil, for other Afflictions Reason Cures, but Reason itself promotes remorse upon ill Actions; gnawing upon the Soul to its Shame and Confusion: For as they who have Agues or Fevers feel a more intense Heat or Cold than those who dwell under the Pole or the Equinoctial: so the mind is less affected with outward Accidents; but an ill Conscience! when 'tis Eccho'd from within, I ! none but I my self have been the cause of all this! what Torture and Despair! Whereas on the contrary, the worker of Righteousness not only enjoys the immediate Pleasure of his good Actions, but provides wisely against Age, Adversity, and Death it self, and lays up continually Satisfaction for Hereafter: Such Satisfaction as not only Reason promotes, but Revelation Encourages by repeated Promises of the greatest Assistance and Reward: Wherefore no Plenty of Riches, no Nobility of Blood, no Extent of Empire can yield such Serenity and Calmness to Life as

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the Souls being free from ill Actions ; for when that Fountain of Action is preserv'd pure and clear ; good Deeds perpetually flowing from it, bless us with the sweetest Peace, and fullest Happiness ; make us look back upon Life with Pleasure , and forward upon Death with Joy. Let us then be so far from doubting of the Torments hereafter, or questioning the Eternity of them, as rather to be Astonish'd at the Divine goodness in promising Immortal Joys, Immortal Happiness for our momentary Obedience here, when we have so great, and so immediate a Reward as a good Conscience !

But tho this may be so ; yet, Can no outward Evils disturb this Peace of the Mind ? Will not the Malice of wicked Men, or the suddenness of great Afflictions shake and disturb it ? In answer to this I proceed to the other part of my Text, *The effect of Righteousness shall be Quietness and Assurance for Ever.*

By the first of these is meant that the Work of Righteousnes shall produce Peace in regard of our Neighbour : this we are assured from the Scriptures, *That when a mans ways Please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him.* (Prov. xvi. 7.) And that this is agreeable to Reason, will appear, if we consider what it is that is most apt to Provoke or Please mankind, and the Nature of Goodnes or Righte-

Righteousness in general. The great cause of Strife and Contention is the Injustice that is offer'd to Men in their Persons, Estates or Reputations, and that by Ambition, Covetousness or Detraction: Ambition is generally the cause of the other two, for this being the thirst of Power; Power consists in the having many others at Command, and that comes to pass either by their necessary Dependance upon us for their Interest, or their voluntary Service for Reward, and this is the Power of Riches; or else it consists in the Reverence and Love which Men bear to Superior merit, and this is the Power of Reputation. Both these Ambition endeavours to lessen in others, and Usurp for it self by all kinds of Fraud and Injustice; and from the striving for these on the one side, or endeavouring to keep 'em on the other, arise most Quarrels and Divisions: But the worker of Righteousness makes no Enemies by these ways, but is fair and open in all his Words and Actions; Impartial to Himself, and Just to his Neighbour. Besides, that Love and Charity which is every where inculcated in the Gospel, so quiets our Passions, so softens our Tempers, causes such a generous neglect of Injuries, such a ready and watchful disposition to Oblige, such a calmnes and sweetnes of Conversation, without Offence to the Present, or Injury to the Absent;

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that a Righteous Man has no Affronts to Revenge, because he gives none; and no Enemies to fear, because he makes none: but on the contrary is lov'd and defended, because he is a general Good, and because his Peace and Happiness is every Mans Interest.

But further: this is so thro the nature of Goodness, or Righteousness in general, which uses of it self either to prevail upon the best Tempers, or to Awe the Worst.

The Soul beeing most work'd upon by Sensible Objects, the power of Example is very Great in the doing Good as well as Evil. There is a Secret manner of Conviction in good Actions, which persuades more than all the force of Reason or Charms of Eloquence. Something in Human Nature rises and opposes it self against Arguments, especially when they come from an Equal, not but that we could be contented to entertain Truth could we find it out our selves; but we can seldom endure that Superiority which the Discovery of it seems to give others over us, no not in matters of the greatest importance, of Salvation it self.

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But when the light of our good Actions shines before Men, it pleases without suspicion; it wins insensibly upon their Souls, and makes 'em to Glorifie, with us, our Father which is in Heaven.

And if Righteousness has not this effect upon stubborn Minds, yet it strikes 'em at least with awe and terrore. The most ignorant People have very Early Notions of Good and Evil, and if these be any thing improv'd by Education, open'd and confirm'd by Reasoning, 'tis impossible that they should be so entirely rooted out by any Habit of Vice, but that there must remain enough of the Knowledge of Good to apprehend what is so in others, and regard it accordingly. There are many Instances in History how Robbers and Murtherers have suddenly held their Hands at the sight of single and disarm'd Men of known Goodnes; and how raging Multitudes have been restrain'd by the Presence of Men of Publick Worth, as if, as S. Chrysostom says of Daniels Lions, (2nd. e. T. 5. p. 17.) they saw the Venerable and Majestick Image of God Resplendent in him, they beheld the same Characters of Goodness which were visible in Adam before his Fall, when every Beast approach'd to receive its name from him; and this has been par-

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ticulary Observable in good Magistrates, or great Persons, *who scatter evil with their Eyes*, as Solomon says Elegantly ; their very looks being sufficient to damp and chill the most successful Impudence, and Habitual Wickednes.

But Lastly, Tho this should not be always so, but good Men may sometimes suffer under the Malice of evil Men : and not only so ; but tho they may be afflicted with any other Calamity whatsoever, yet the Work of Righteousness is a sufficient defence against this, in that Assurance which it always carries with it. This consists in an Absolute Trust in God upon account of his Goodness, Wisdom, and Power, and in a joyful Resignation of our selves to his good Pleasure ; this is the effect of Righteousness as 'tis the produet of a good Conscience. *Beloved, if our Hearts Condemn us not, says S. John, then have we Confidence towards God* ; therefore no Affliction can disturb the Peace or Quiet of the Righteous ; keep thy Eye fix'd in humble Confidence upon the God of Peace and nothing shall offend thee : *Thou wilt keep him in perfect Peace whose mind is staid on thee, because he trusted in thee.* (Isaiah xxvi. 3.) And what is the ground of this Assurance ; the knowing that God will not tempt 'em ; try 'em ; farther then they are

are able to bear, and the shortness of such Trials: we no sooner hear that many are the Troubles of the Righteous, (*Psalm xxxiv. 19.*) but it follows immediately, *The Lord will deliver him out of all.*

'But then again, the Prophet adds for ever: the Effect of Righteousness shall be quiet, and Assurance for ever. This is that which makes the Righteous Mans Joy complete, and which settleth his Hope, and confirms his Faith; all other Assurance is vain and finite, that, in God infinite as His Being: What Confidence, alas! in Man, whose Days are a Shadow that flyeth away, their Breath goeth forth, they return to Earth, and all their Thoughts, their Projects perish: This is the end of that busie Creature, who is so ingenious in Disturbing his Neighbour and himself. But thou, O God, art from Everlasting, and thy Years shall not fail; thou art God blessed for ever, and thy Righteousness extends to Childrens Children, even to all Generations.

This is that Assurance for ever, which supports such as work Righteousness in the Day of Trouble, and in the Day of Death: All Evils are dreadful
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only as they threaten Death ; but what is this, in all its utmost Horror, to a good Conscience ? They who believe that all things happen by Chance, and that nothing is after Death, may be frightened and alarm'd at whatever disturbs or shortens their *only* Being. But they who believe another World, may enjoy the fullest Quiet in the greatest Afflictions, yes, when the blackest Calamities thicken dreadfully upon us ; this sweet Assurance breaks thro all, and shews us beyond 'em the Prospect of Heaven opening still wider and wider to our view, and the Son of God Himself encouraging us to be faithful unto Death (but unto Death, which is never far off in Prosperity, but which is still nearer, the greater the Adversity is) *Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.*

Therefore with what an equal and deliberate Courage, with what a generous Indifferency, as to Life or Death, doth the Good Christian bear himself ; he despairs to fly to a Grave in the greatest Calamities ; and yet whenever his Lord calls, he readily resigns his Dust and Ashes ; He gladly quits that Body which is subject to so many Dangers and Diseases, to receive it again in a short time ; to receive it so chang'd, so improv'd, so spiritualiz'd, as never

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never to be sick, never to be tempted, never to be laid down more, but to remain with Him for ever, who is the first and the last, who liveth and was dead, and is now alive for evermore.

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